

Vietnam War 1957 - 1975



UTAH AND THE VIETNAM CONFLICT

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Utah History Encyclopedia

During the 1960s and 1970s, Utah was affected by the Vietnam Conflict in many ways. Utahns served in all branches of the armed forces; many were decorated for valor in combat, were held prisoner in North Vietnam, or came home without limbs and with other permanent injuries. At home, Utahns both supported and protested the Vietnam policies; many resisted while others volunteered for the draft; some worked to supply, equip, and train personnel sent to Vietnam, sought to understand the meaning and implications of the war, and mourned the death of friends, neighbors, and relatives killed in action.

After the war, Utah welcomed home released prisoners of war while waiting for news of those still listed as missing in action. Utahns also helped Vietnamese refugees who escaped their communist-controlled homeland make new homes in the Beehive State. Returning Utah Vietnam veterans tried to put their war experience behind them without forgetting their personal and collective sacrifice. In doing so, they met with some support, a great amount of indifference, and, on occasion, hostility.

Like most of the country, the majority of Utahns saw the events leading up to the Vietnam War in the context of the Cold War—the worldwide struggle between democracy and communism for survival. From 1940 until 1945 Vietnam was occupied by the Japanese, who used the French colonial administration while controlling policies from behind the scenes. In 1941 Ho Chi Minh organized the Viet Minh to fight against the Japanese. After 1945 the Viet Minh successfully resisted France's efforts to restore control in Vietnam. The Battle of Dien Bien Phu, at the conclusion of which French forces surrendered to the Viet Minh on May 7, 1954, drew headlines and articles in Utah daily newspapers. Two articles in the Salt Lake Tribune for May 8, 1954, proved ironic and prophetic. One quoted a Paris cafe owner who called the defeat "A terrible shame. They let our best soldiers get killed like that. Dien Bien Phu was not worth it." Headlines in the article that followed asked, "Yanks to Indo?"

Five years later, the front page of the Tribune for July 10, 1959, carried an article on the deaths of Major Dale R. Buis and Captain Chester M. Guanand, the first two Americans to die in Vietnam. Following the Gulf of Tonkin attacks and on the eve of congressional passage of the Tonkin Resolution, the Tribune reflected the opinion of most Utahns in justifying retaliation against North Vietnam while urging that the war be kept limited and fearing that world communist leaders would expand the conflict into a full-scale war.

On March 8, 1965, the first marine combat troops landed in Vietnam to guard the strategic Da Nang Air Base against communist attacks, the Tribune responded to European criticism that the landing marked an escalation of the conflict by stating that it was a step "designed to keep the brush fire from getting out of control."

Less than five months after the first American combat troops were sent to defend Da Nang Airfield, the popular Deseret News sports writer and colonel in the Utah National Guard, Hack Miller, was in Vietnam; in a series of articles carried over a two-week period in August 1965 and during the month of March 1966 he described Vietnam, the war, and the activities of some native-born Utahns.

Utah sent more than its share of young men to Vietnam. Statistics from the 1970 census indicate that 27,910 served in Vietnam out of a potential 326,029 males age sixteen and over. The 8.6 percent placed Utah in fifth place behind Alaska, Hawaii, Washington, and Nevada, and well ahead of the national average of 6.9 percent. This high percentage was especially noteworthy because of several factors which tended to bring down the number of men serving in the military through the deferments that were available for them. These included: LDS missions for which deferments were available; a higher percentage of Utah males attending college with Utah leading the nation in young males attending college; and the tendency for Utahns to start families earlier than in most parts of the country. By 1976, the estimated number of Vietnam War Veterans living in Utah and who served between 1964 and 1975 was over 47,000. Among those who served in Vietnam were members of the Utah National Guard who volunteered individually for service. No Utah National Guard units were activated during the war; however, some volunteer crews from the Utah Air National Guard spent weeks and months on active duty in Vietnam.

Utah's daily and weekly newspapers reported assignments to and the return from Vietnam of local soldiers and sailors. Too frequently the newspapers carried notices of local casualties from the war. The papers also carried reports of participation by Utahns in such projects as "Operation Friendship" in 1966, in which several organizations collected food, clothes, and medicine for South Vietnamese peasants. A year later, "Operation Schoolhouse," sought to raise donations for the construction of schoolhouses in Vietnam through a marathon Volleyball game at the University of Utah over Memorial Day Weekend in 1967.

An early Utah opponent of the war in Vietnam was Marriner Eccles, president of the First Security Corporation, governor of the Federal Reserve Board under Franklin D. Roosevelt, and a supporter of Lyndon Johnson's domestic programs. In July 1965 Eccles told Johnson that his Vietnam policy was based on fatal errors and that the "national interest would best be served if the administration disentangled itself from a course of action that is bound to be ruinous." Six months later, in early January 1966, Eccles openly challenged Johnson's Vietnam policy in a newspaper article that argued that the United States presence in Vietnam was indefensible. "We are there as an aggressor in violation of our treaty obligations under the United Nation's charter." Eccles remained steadfast in his opposition to American troops in Vietnam until the last were withdrawn. He pushed for international trade and positive diplomatic relations as a means for establishing world friendship and ultimately dealing with the threat of communism.

Another Utahn who received national attention for his writing about the Vietnam War was University of Utah Professor James Clayton. An economic historian, Clayton argued that beyond the human suffering which the war brought, the real cost of the Vietnam War would come in the future through veteran benefit payments, interest payments, and other war related costs that would exceed by at least three times the \$330 billion dollar cost of the war. He also put the expenditures on the Vietnam War for the ten-year period between 1959 and

1969 in perspective noting that it was more than had been spend in America's entire history for public higher education or police protection, and that it represented one-fifth of the value of all personal financial assets of all living Americans.

While Utahns were not necessarily pleased with the draft laws, they did not favor those who sought to avoid military service by leaving the country or deserting once they were inducted. A month after the 1973 cease-fire, 80 percent of Utahns opposed amnesty for those who fled from military service, and a year later the 70 percent still opposed any form of amnesty. It is difficult to estimate how many Utahns fled the country to avoid the draft or deserted from military service. Following the war, fewer than fifty men who violated Selective Service rules or received dishonorable discharges, signed up for an amnesty program set up under President Gerald Ford. Of those who applied who applied, only fifteen were assigned to the civilian service called for under the amnesty program. Of the fifteen, ten dropped out of the program before completing their assigned time. In the end, the United States Attorney for the District of Utah concluded that none of the Utah applicants would be required to render alternative service.

During the course of the war, protests and demonstrations were held against America's involvement in Vietnam. Counter-demonstrations also sought to indicate support for a military resolution to the Vietnam question. Utah's first protest march occurred in downtown Salt Lake City on 18 April 1965 with forty demonstrators. Four and a half years later, the demonstrators had increased a hundredfold-on October 15, 1969 more than four thousand demonstrators participated in nearly a full day of protest-or moratorium, as it was called-which began with speeches at a teach-in held in the University of Utah Union Building and continued with a march from Reservoir Park down South Temple Street to the Federal Building at 100 South and State Street where Reverend G. Edward Howlett of St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral read the names of Utahns killed in Vietnam and other speakers called for an immediate withdrawal from Vietnam. The demonstration was peaceful with only one teenage girl arrested, on the charge of displaying a flag or banner with intent to engender disloyalty to the government of the United States.

Students at other Utah campuses, including Westminster College, Utah State University, Weber State and Southern Utah State gathered to listen to opponents and proponents debate the war, while at Brigham Young University some professors used class time to discuss the war with their students. An estimated 250 counter-demonstrators met at the City and County Building in Salt Lake City on the same day (October 15) for a two-hour rally during which Salt Lake City Commissioner Jake Garn called for the nonvocal majority to stand up and be counted; he charged that if the moratorium were successful, the United States would be communist and 40,000 American lives would have been sacrificed in vain, and he blamed protestors for prolonging the war and aiding the enemy. However, Republican Representative Sherman P. Lloyd saw the moratorium as good for America because it was "a valid exercise of free speech....Americans came to grips with themselves. They decided where to stand." While other demonstrations and anti-war activities followed, none were on a scale of the October 1969 moratorium, which the Salt Lake Tribune called the largest peace demonstration in Utah history.

Lieutenant Colonel Jay R. Jensen of Sandy was the first Utahn to write and publish a book-length account of his Vietnam experiences. His 1974 book, *Six Years In Hell*, describes his capture on February 18, 1967 and six year ordeal as a prisoner of the North Vietnamese.

On October 14, 1989 the Utah Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated. Located on the west side of the State Capitol Grounds, the memorial includes an eight-foot-high statue of a soldier returning from battle with his buddy's rifle, flanked by a curved, gray granite wall with polished black granite panels on which are inscribed the names of the 388 men and one woman who died or were listed as missing in action in Vietnam between August 13, 1963 and April 4, 1975. The statue was sculpted by Clyde Ross Morgan and cast by Neil Hadlock of Wasatch Bronzeworks of Lehi. The granite work was done by Mark H. Bott Monument Company of Ogden and Dave Bott using gray granite from Georgia and black granite from the same source in southern India as that used in the Washington D.C. Vietnam Memorial. Cost for the Memorial was over \$300,000 with the Utah State Legislature appropriating \$116,000 and the rest from private donations.

More than two decades after the last Utah veterans returned from Vietnam, the legacy of the war continues to be an important factor in the lives of thousands of Utahns. Also, an ongoing legacy of the Vietnam War is the 12,000 South-east Asian refugees and immigrants who have made Utah their home since 1975.

WASATCH COUNTY VETERANS LIST

VIETNAM WAR

1957 TO 30 APRIL 1975

Adams, Stephen L.
 Allbee, Robert D.
 Allison, Theodore
 Anderson, Allan Sterling
 Anderson, Clair P.
 Anderson, Jack Jr.
 Applegate, William Jolee
 Averett, Erick
 Averett, Kent *G.*
 Averett, Lynn F.
 Azlin, Bob C.
 Baker, Dale
 Banks, Dan
 Bartell, Robert
 Bates, Arthur T.
 Baum, Robert Kiskadden
 Beckendorf, William Fredrick
 Bender, Larry
 Benedict, Steven
 Bethers, Harvey James
 Bethers, Lorin J.
 Bethers, Samuel G.
 Blake, Phillip T.
 Boren, Alden *Leo*
 Brandt, Charles L.
 Breeze, James Thomas
 Brierley, Blain D.
 Brimhall, Leon Harold
 Broadhead, Jay E.
 Broadhead, Robert G.
 Bronson, Larry K.
 Brown, Randall (Wounded)
 Burbidge, James V.
 Burbidge, Michael
 Buys, Richard M.
 Carlile, Robert Elmo
 Carlson, Nile D.

Casper, Dallas D.
 Casper, Scott V.
 Chatwin, Jerry Clifton
 Chatwin, Maurice C.
 Christensen, Neil
 Clayburn, Frank
 Clayburn, Grant B.
 Clegg, Gary
 Clegg, Thomas Way
 Clyde, Lynn
 Coleman, Guy L.
 Coleman, Thomas C
 Coleman, Thomas R
 Cox, Ronald Arlen
 Crisler, Lynn Terry
 Crook, Curtis
 Curry, Allen
 Davis, Billy J.
 Davis, Brent
 Davis, Gary R. *ex*
 Davis, Joseph Robert
 Davis, Stacy A.
 Davis, Val
 Dean, Nolan K.
 Denbow, Roland Marvin
 Dixon, Ann
 Dixon, James K.
 Donaldson, Daniel F.
 Duke, Dean Woodrow
 Duke, Earl Lawrence
 Duke, Jon R.
 Duke, William Howard
 Eastman, Jonathan G.
 Edwards, Terry Thomas
 Elliott, Lawrence Gaylen
 Epperson, Blaine L.
 Etsitty, Thomas

Melvin Giles Christensen

Melvin Giles Christensen, age 60, born December 5, 1929 in Heber City, Utah to Melrose and Reva Giles Christensen, deceased October, 19, 1990 in San Diego, California.
 Graduated West High School in 1947. Was a career Navy man before being wounded in Viet Nam, serving in the Frog and Seal special units.
 Survived by wife, Nancy, San Diego, Calif.; mother, Reva Giles Dodge, Salt Lake City, Utah; sons, Bill, Bruce, and Chris, San Diego, Calif.; sisters, Norma C. Uddell, Salt Lake City, Utah; and Wanda Shelby, San Jose, Calif.
 Memorial services to be held at the U.S. Navy Amphibious Base in Coronado, California.

Leon Draper
Marvin Draper

Brad Ewing

WASATCH COUNTY VETERANS LIST
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Farfel, Douglas W.
Farrell, Steven B.
Farrell, William H. *Holmes*
Farrer, Wayne H.
Fieldstead, Lonnie
Fillmore, David M.
Flora, Jimmie J.
Ford, Larry
Fortie, Neil
Gale, Donald Michael
Gale, Micheal Stephen
Gates, Dan A.
Gertsch, Duane R.
Giles, Dan A.
Giles, Joseph Eugene
Giles, Steven
Givens, Rodney
Gurule, Steven J. Jr.
Hardman, Jeffrey
Hardman, Wayne E.
Haueter, Hylton Jay
Hendricksen, David Ray Black
Higgs, Alan Lance
Hofheins, Danny Don
Holmes, William
Holt, Max
Holt, Ronald
Horrocks, Terry Alan
Huber, Don Alma
Huber, Frank E.
Huber, Mark S.
Hunley, Robert T. *James Leonard Wie*
Jensen, Darrell L.
Jensen, Lamar G.
Johnson, Emory R.
Johnson, Loren
Jones, Jerold N.
Jordan, George R.
Jordan, Robert
Kay, Dennis

Kennard, Lon Harvey
Kinsey, David Ray
Kohler, Alvah Eugene
Kohler, James Fred
Lamb, James E.
Lamb, Jerry (Wounded)
Lindsay, Brent G.
Lindsay, David Thomas (WOUNDED) *Purple Heart*
Lindsay, Gary W.
Lindsay, Scott P.
Lindsay, Stanley W.
Lindsay, Ted
Loertscher, Brian R.
Loertscher, Leslie Rush
Maddox, Steven J.
Madson, James M.
Maez, Anthony Ramon (WOUNDED)
Maez, Lento F.
Mahoney, Larry Evan
Mair, Dale
Mair, Philman Raphael
Mair, Ray
Marsh, Robert L.
Mason, Edward L.
Mayoh, Frank
Mayoh, Leo
Mayoh, Russell Joseph
McCotter, Orson Lane
McDonald, Aven Jesse
McDonald, Carroll Blaine
McDonald, Karl R.
McKenzie, Wilbur Franklin
McNaughtan, William J.
Mecham, Gary Charles
Mecham, LaVerl O.
Mickelson, Calvin G.
Mills, Steven Dee
Montgomery, Steve *n*
Montoya, Roy L.
Montoya, Valreo Joe

WASATCH COUNTY VETERANS LIST
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Morgan, Billy
Morgan, Joe
Moser, Curt
Moulton, Craig
Moulton, Sydney J.
Muir, Clyde Gale
Muir, Gary Lloyd
Murdock, Steven B.
Nelson, Douglas E. Sr.
Nicol, Steven
North, Larry C.
Nye, Thomas Arlen
Oaks, John Robert
Olsen, Gill C.
Olson, James K.
Ostmann, Francis A.
Parcell, Casey
Parks, David A.
Parks, John D.
Peterson, Brad E.
Phillips, David R.
Phillips, Kay
Potter, Mickey E.
Powell, Scott M.
Price, Michael J.
Provost, Paul C.
Provost, William R. (Wounded)
Pyper, Ralph A.
Radmall, Robert
Rasband, David
Remund, Johnny G.
Richardson, Keith Allen
Richardson, Ronnie D.
Scribner, Guy A.
Shumway, Clark
Simmons, Craig J.
Smedley, James Judson
Smith, George E.
Smith, Steven D.
Smith, William Albert

Snider, Kenneth E.
Springer, Richard
Stratton, Kenneth L.
Street, Mikel A.
Sweat, Lew R.
Sweat, Phil H.
Sweatfield, Billie Leon
Sweatfield, Bobby Lee
Thacker, Chad
Todd, David Russell
Townley, Monte Kelly
Tucker, Howard Neil
Turnbow, Randall
Turner, Melvon David
VanWagoner, Phillip
Wall, James Russell Jr.
Wall, John
Wardell, James
Warr, Floyd
Warr, Neil
Watkins, Lynn Floyd
Webb, Allen D.
Webb, Daniel W.
*Welch, Blaine A.
Whiting, Kirk A.
Wilson, Doyle
Wilson, George J.
Wilson, Lowe Lamont
Wood, Larry I.
Wootton, Gregory V.
Wootton, Scott D.
Wright, Kent E.
Young, Dee J.
Young, James R.
Young, Robert Nile
Zupan, Terry

Killed in Action

*Welch, Blaine A.